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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the differences between Marxian/Gramscian educators and Foucauldian educators regarding school curriculum, teacher education, knowledge production, and other factors. Marxian/Gramscian educators view the school as continuing to reproduce unfair and unjust institutions and to assert that ideology shapes schooling. Foucauldian educators argue that the notion of schooling is contingently constructed and reconstructed by various technologies of power/knowledge. In the instance of school curriculum, Marxian/Gramscian educators question how the white majority dominates the contexts of curriculum distribution and minorities are excluded from curriculum planning. In contrast, Foucauldian educators question what knowledge is normalized or constructed in the curriculum planning and how people are included or excluded. In the discourse of teacher education, Marxian educators question how ideology shapes teachers, while Foucauldian educators look at how various knowledge productions constitute the notion of the teacher. (Contains 23 references.) (Author/SM)

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POSTMODERNISM AND MARXISM: WHAT IS CALLED INTO QUESTION IN THE EDUCATIONAL DISCOURSE?

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Abstract

This paper examines the differences between Marxian/Gramscian educators and Foucauldian educators regarding school curriculum, teacher education, knowledge production, etc. Marxian/Gramscian educators view the school as continuing to reproduce unfair and unjust institutions, and to assert that ideology shapes schooling. Foucauldian educators, on the other hand, argue that the notion of schooling is contingently constructed and reconstructed by various technologies of power/knowledge. In the instance of school curriculum, Marxian/Gramscian educators question how the white majority dominates the contexts of curriculum distribution, and minorities are excluded from curriculum planning; in contrast, Foucauldian educators question what knowledge is normalized or constructed in the curriculum planning and how people are included/excluded. In the discourse of teacher education, Marxian educators question how ideology shapes teachers while Foucauldian educators look at how various knowledge productions constitute the notion of the teacher.

POSTMODERNISM AND MARXISM: WHAT IS CALLED INTO QUESTION IN THE EDUCATIONAL DISCOURSE?

This paper investigates how postmodernist educators and Marxist educators pursue different educational discourse.[1] For a long time, many Marxist educators have attempted to apply Karl Marx's and Antonio Gramsci's notion of power while postmodernist educators have influenced by Michel Foucault's theory since 1980s. Generally speaking, Marx asserts that power is an ideological issue and power can be possessed. In Marx's scheme, power is a core set of concepts: class domination and a capitalist state. Gramsci's conception of power as hegemony developed a new treasury for Marxist theorists.[2] In Gramsci's notion, hegemony is an anti-economic problematic of ideology, is a complete fusion of political, intellectual and moral leadership, and is the way to empower proletariat. On the contrary, for Foucault, power is neither an ideological concern nor a domain dominated by one social group over others. A multiplicity of actions engenders power, and power operates through discourse associated with the construct of knowledge. Foucault's theory does not assume agency.

Marxian/Gramscian educators and Foucauldian educators take very different routes to understanding school curriculum, teacher education and knowledge production, raise completely different questions, and guide different analyses and outcomes.[3] Marxians/Gramscians tend to look at the way in which ideologies shape educational figures, while Foucauldians argue that the notion of schooling is contingently constructed and reconstructed by various technologies of power/knowledge. This paper does not attempt to identify wether one theoretical approach is better than the other, but to dissect how the "truth" is told. By using Foucault's theories, we can take very different routes to understand schooling, teaching and teachers from Marxian educators.

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Marxian/Gramscian Educators

During the 1970s and early 1980s in the United States, the radical Marxian/Gramscian educators armed their minds with Marx's notion of power, the dominant "sovereign power". Marx's conception of capitalist production--the capitalist production produces both commodities and capital-labor relation --was a weapon for Marxian/Gramscian educators' inquiries. For them, power referred to "the capacity of a class to realize specific objective interests" and the capacity of wielding class power upon their opponents (Poulantzas, 1986, p. 146). Generally, Marxian/Gramscian educators criticized schooling in capitalist society as a form of injustice. Bowles and Gintis (1976) argued that the school system in the United States is unfair and unjust because it helps the capitalist society reproduce unequal, repressive and exploitative social relations, the so-called "reproduction" argument. The educational system helps integrate youth into the economic system through a structural correspondence between its social relation and those of production. Students are incorporated into the hierarchical division of labor by the social relations of the school.

In the field of teacher educational reform, Marxian/Gramscian educators argued that the state employed its sovereign power to seek increasing bureaucratic control of teaching and curricula. Carlson (1992) asserted that from the late 1960s to the 1990s, the top-down teacher educational reform reduced teachers' autonomy and deskilled teachers. It caused a crisis of teacher education. In teacher education, sovereign power has become more intense, curricula and teaching have been determined more from the top, and testing has become more important.

The analyses of sovereign power became the weapon for the advocates of "the sociology of school knowledge" which emerged in the 1970s among Marxian/Gramscian educators in the United States and Great Britain. As Popkewitz and Brennan (1997) have criticized, in the argument of the sociology of school knowledge, sovereign power is used to "explain the origins of domination and subjugation in society" (p. 10). The advocates of the sociology of school knowledge

see curriculum as socially-politically organized knowledge (Young, 1971). Government policies permeate classroom curricula, text books, etc. which represent certain groups' interests. Knowledge tended to be seen as a ideological issue. Giroux in his earlier work (1981), reduced the concept of ideology either to the logic of domination or to a method of inquiry designed to uncover how domination works in the interest of capitalist rationality. He viewed schools as hegemonic institutions. Schools play a significant role in maintaining social control through ideological means. The way in which the schools function as ideological agents can be seen by examining the schools as institutions, the role of knowledge, and educators' function as mediating forces between the summit of power and the everyday structuring of classroom experiences. According to Giroux, school knowledge is seen as cultural and ideological hegemony, which is a form of social collectivity, selected from the universe of knowledge. The policies of schooling represent the culture and ideology of the few dominant people. McLaren (1989) protested:

> The dominant curriculum separates from the issue of power and treats it in an unabashedly technical manner; knowledge is seen in overwhelmingly instrumental terms as something to be mastered. That knowledge is always an ideological construction linked to particular interests and social relations generally receives little consideration in education program (p. 180).

Since the 1980s, a number of Marxian/Gramscian educators started to apply Gramsci's notion of hegemony to their inquiries. They made efforts to integrate hegemony with power-based legitimation in the field of education (see, e.g., Giroux, 1992; Giroux and McLaren, 1994). For Gramscian educators, the relationships between power, complex organization and the state are inseparable from the political economy and a political sociology of educational policy making. Their efforts of making educational policy studies related to the issues of the organizational context in which dominant power is exercised. Morrow and Torres

(1995) advanced that the "approach to rules, power, and domination as applied to policy making needs to be complemented by a discussion of a theory of the state in order to understand . . . the production rules of public policy" (p. 344).

Giroux (1993) asserted that educators have to recognize the role of the social agent in order to be capable "to make affective alliances with forms of agency that will provide new grounds of popular authority" and to struggle for "the popular classes in favor of joining a patrician priesthood of left mandarin metropolitan intellectuals" (p. 414). Marxian/Gramscian educators require an autonomous agent in order to resist the dominating powers of the state, economy, and society. Following Gramsci, these educators theorize that the job of the intellectual is to "empower" those who are oppressed. Agency, therefore, is the only hope for empowering people in the face of domination. What is new in the Gramscian educators is that they do not merely grumble over what they consider the unjust education system, but they also try to empower teachers and students to be able to participate in curriculum and policy making.

Moreover, what influence has Marx's notion of history had on Marxian/Gramscian educators? Although there are diverse types of Marxian/Gramscian educators, the majority of them consider that there is a continuity in the history which has produced unjust schooling. Giroux (1983) explains that the reproduction of hegemony has existed since the turn of the century when the rationale of school took on the language of efficiency and control to provide a false sense of neutrality. He argues that there is a line in curriculum history from Thorndike, Bobbitt and Tyler to the present. They attempted to produce a neutral methodology, and the continuing transformation of the field into a neutral instrumentation in the service of structurally non-neutral interests served to hide the political and economic injustice in education.

In sum, the most distinguishing characteristic of Marxian/Gramscian educational theorists is the assumption of agency and the positing of domination and resistance. Since the only possibility for resistance is in the human agent who can

resist domination, in the theory, Marxian/Gramscian writers must have a personal characteristic that is not affected by power domination. If there were no agent in Marxian/Gramscian theory, revolution would not be possible and the dominant force would take over everything. However, Marxian/Gramscian theorists do not explain how power can dominate some parts but not other parts.

Foucauldian Educators

Unlike Marxian/Gramscian theories, Foucault's theory does not assume agency. Foucauldian theorists are suspicious about power. Foucauldian theorists can not predict in advance where power works and what power might do. Revolution may repeat dominant power. Power circulates. We can not predict which actions might be "resistance" and which might be "compliance". Each instance of power relations must be carefully analyzed with the assumption that many--sometimes contradictory--forms of power may be operating.

Foucauldian educators have argued that multiple forms of power/knowledge relations construct schooling. Popkewitz (1996a) has argued that current practices to democratize the school are the effects of power and strategies of governing although they seem to be implicit. Policies and sciences of school reform are constituted by modern social technologies which are integrated with the modern state. Expert knowledge as well, contributes to building the notion of democratized schooling. Popkewitz points out that "History, sociology, philosophy, and pedagogy are. . . socially constructed and politically embedded disciplines of practice" (1991, p. 10).

Foucault's notion of governmentality—the institutional technologies and the techniques of the self—has facilitated the educational discourse. Popkewitz and Brennan (1997) applied governmentality to their inquiry of schooling and university sectors and concluded that "education, both schooling and university sectors, has become so central in the development of new forms of governmentality, exemplifying new strategies, tactics and techniques of power to furnish what had become the

major form of power relations defining institutions and individuals in western society" (p. 13). Various forms of new principle of producing power/knowledge have been central to the development of the schooling.

Regarding contemporary educational reform, Popkewitz (1996a) argued that government policy as well as teachers' and students' attitudes and attributes are embedded in reform discourses. For example, from the administrative point of view, teachers and students are expected to be problem-solving. In these educational reform practices, "the governing of the individual is not through the explicit defining of procedures but through the deployments of 'reasoning' through which the teacher and child construct their capabilities and actions"(Popkewitz, 1996b, p. 14).

In the discourse of child development, Marshall (1995) shows an example of how the institutional power and the techniques of the self are a dual relation. He sees the child as being socially constructed. For him, the values as to what is considered normal and the school discipline influences the educational needs and interests of the child. Consequently, the child is discursively constructed as what he or she has been classified, e.g., gifted, at risk, scientist or manager. It is to say that "how the child develops or grows presupposes the object, the developing child, and because it is presupposed in the very practices and structure of the classroom and the pedagogy" (p. 371). The child's choices and identity are constructed in the discourse of curriculum planning.

Similar to Marshall's argument, Ball (1990) has pointed out that school management is a moral technology whose basis is disciplinary. It is a technology of power that enables the monitoring and control of schools and teachers. It also constructs norms that standardizes the good or bad schools and teachers. Schools and teachers are expected to be aware of their own weaknesses and to strive for self-improvement. Localized practices of school management "are micro-power structures and power relations that touch every aspects of organizational life" which constitute teacher's roles, aspirations and desires (p. 165).

Hunter too, in *Rethinking the School: Subjectivity, Bureaucracy, Criticism*

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provides us with a Foucauldian notion of governmentality. The production of systems of schooling involves a complexity of power relations. Bureaucracies and the nationwide governmental requirements played a role in school system development. At the same time, a variety of internal "self-surveillance" and disciplines were a part of schooling modes. Hunter displays a various power/knowledge relation which has changed the notion of schooling since the nineteenth century. Government policy, experts' knowledge, such as statistical surveys, IQ tests, and religious disciplines of pastoral guidance, etc., all impacted the shaping of schooling.

Gore (1993) applies Foucault's conception of knowledge and governmentality to examine practical pedagogy in teacher education. She argues that pedagogy is "the process of knowledge production" which constructs teacher, students and schools. She discovered that recent pedagogy has "emphasized self-disciplining whereby students keep themselves and each other in check. . . .Theses technologies are enacted at the site of the body; eyes, hands, mouths, movements" (p. 60).

Furthermore, Foucauldian educators argue that all these technologies of power are historical contingencies which come together to constitute the school system. Hunter, again, in *Rethinking the School: Subjectivity, Bureaucracy, Criticism* explores the genealogy of technologies on schooling:

> This essay. . . . provides an account of the school system that is unprincipled in both senses. It does so by adopting a "genealogical " approach to the topic. . . . To construe the approach more positively, we can say that this genealogy concentrates instead on the contingent circumstances in which the school system came into being, and on the available cultural techniques, institutions and modes of reflection from which it was assembled. The picture that emerges is thus not one of the school's appearance as the partial manifestation of an underlying principle, but of its improvised assemblage as a device to meet the contingencies of a particular history (pp. xvi-xvii).

Hunter examines the way in which all of these historically contingent forces came together to shape the school system. He argues that there is no causal relationship to be found.

Foucauldian Educators vs. Marxian Educators: Different Inquiries

In sum, Marxian/Gramscian educators and Foucauldian educators have taken very different routes to understand schooling. On the one hand, Marxian/Gramscian educators view the school as continuing to reproduce unfair and unjust institutions, and to assert that ideology shapes schooling. Foucauldian educators, on the other hand, argue that the notion of schooling is contingently constructed and reconstructed by various technologies of power/knowledge.

Regarding what political role educational researchers should play, Marxian educators argue that educational researchers have to "seek a kind of knowledge that will help students recognize the social function of particular forms of knowledge... to provide students with a model that permits them to examine the underlying political, social, and economic foundations of the larger society" and to enable them to realize that the institutional power produces unequal and unjust educational policies (Mclaren, 1989, pp. 168-169). Pointing the way to possible solutions is what Marxian educators attempt to do. In contrast, Foucauldian educators believe that the role of educational researchers is not to tell teachers and students what is knowledge and truth, not to direct them how to act and how to solve problems, but to problematize the present situation, to understand what has constructed school policies or the notion of teachers and students in a certain way, and to think about how the "truth/knowledge" which has been implanted into their mind came to be regarded as unquestioned and unquestionable.

Foucauldian theorists ask the question: who can and will give the "knowledge" to Marxian researchers in order to guide them to fix the unjust world?

Is there any guarantee that these predicted knowledges will fit the future situation? No, as anyone who studies the history of Marxist states must conclude. Foucault's theory recognizes everything is dangerous. Prescribing a path, a way for educators, is also dangerous. In this way, neither past nor future can be viewed as (pre)determined.

Marxian theorists believe that people who have knowledge have power. If people who have no power can get knowledge then they can also have power. However, Foucauldian theorists assert that knowledge is produced by power relations. Knowledge of self, of what is normal, beautiful, good, desireable is all contingent on flexible power relations. Foucauldian theorists recognize various forms of knowledge.

Foucault's notions of power and history provide us with a skeptical outlook. Nothing is absolute. History may not repeat itself. Power, knowledge and truth change over time. Moreover, his theories problematize what we have taken for granted. The "nature" which we take for granted is socially and historically constructed. Using Foucault's notions allows us to ask different questions about the status quo with a particular kind of analysis that may shed some light on how we have come to the present. Foucault seems to say to us, "You may not be as free as you think you are". On the assumption that we have been constructed by historical circumstances, we are compelled to continually ask the questions: what constitutes "freedom" in the context of governmentality?

In applying these theories to particular educational projects, researchers need to be consistently aware that these theories and projects embody particular assumptions. One important question we need to ask is related to the effects of our selected theories and projects. How then can we use Marx's/Gramsci's and Foucault's theories to ask questions? Can we, for example, use them to interrogate each other? When we outline or suggest ways in which teachers can empower their students, shouldn't we also examine our suggestions and their effects? What role can Foucault's theory play in this endeavor?

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I will describe an example of the way this questioning can be undertaken. Periodically, international assessments of students performance are carried out. These assessments compare students from various countries. The comparison between Japanese students and American students often focuses on the superior performance of Japanese students over American students in certain areas. However, Japanese students are often criticized for their lack of critical thinking abilities. In response, teachers are blamed for this aspect of students' shortcomings. Foucault's notion of history and power would allow us to determine how it is that teachers and students have been historically and socially constructed to produce such questions.

Conclusion

As I have examined, there are many differences between Marxcian/ Gramscian and Foucauldian theorists. Marxian/Gramscian and Foucauldian educators diverge from each other on issues regarding school curriculum, teacher education and knowledge production. In the instance of school curriculum, for example, Marxian/Gramscian educators question how the white majority dominates the contexts of curriculum distribution, and minorities are excluded from curriculum planning; however, Foucauldian educators question what knowledge is normalized or constructed in the curriculum planning and how people are included/excluded. Regarding teacher education, Marxian educators question how ideology shapes teachers; in contrast, Foucauldian educators look at how various knowledge productions constitute the notion of the teacher. Thus, different theoretical approaches raise completely different questions, and guide different analyses and outcomes.

Using Foucault's theories allows me to be suspicious about power. Foucauldian theorists can not predict in advance where power works and what power might do. Revolution may repeat dominant power. Power circulates. We can not predict which actions might be "resistance" and which might be "compliance". Each instance of power relations must be carefully analyzed with the assumption that many--sometimes contradictory--forms of power may be operating.

Endnotes

1 I define Marxian educators or Foucauldian educators not by what they have claimed by themselves or have been labeled by others, but by my own interpretation of Marx and Foucault's theories.

2 Gramsci's notion of hegemony is completely different from Lenin's. For Lenin, hegemony was a strategy for revolution. See, e.g., R. Simon (1982), *Gramsci's political thought: An introduction.*

3 Although I have indicated that Gramsci's notion of power is rather different from Marx's, I still do not distinguish Gramscian educators from Marxian educators in this paper, since I do not think that there are any classical Marxian educators in the United States today, even though there are people who claim they are Marxian educators.

4 It is very interesting that since the early 1990s, some Marxian/Gramscian educators, such as Giroux (1992), Aronowitz (1991, in collaboration with Giroux) and McLaren (1993, 1994, 1995) have started to use postmodern, especially Foucault's terminology to their work. However, I do not think they abandon Marx's or Gramsci's theories since, for example, they are still concerned with the unequal redistribution of power within the school and between the school and the large society. I believe that one is still in the same trap if one only changes the vocabulary but does not change the way of reasoning about things.

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